REMARKS

In the Office Action, claims 1-13 are pending and claims 1-13 are rejected. Reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-13 as amended herein is respectfully requested. New claims 14-20 have been added by way of this amendment and response. Consideration and allowance of new claims 14-20 is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Raymond, et al. (6,578,521). Reconsideration of claims 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10 is respectfully requested.

Claim 1 has been amended herein to recite "wherein said silica gel particles are entrapped said agglomerated granules." Accordingly, pursuant to Applicant's amended claim 1, a composite granule is formed by agglomerating the filler material and the silica gel particles such that the silica gel particles are entrapped within the composite granule.

A composite agglomerated particle with the silica gel particle entrapped therein is not disclosed by Raymond, et al. (6,578,521). In contrast, Raymond, et al. discloses combining silica gel with an absorbent material to comprise a *mixture* of the absorbent material and the silica gel. Raymond, et al. states as follows:

> Both the silica gel and clay components of the animal litter composition are in the form of particles of similar average size and shape so that no separation occurs upon preparation and handling, i.e., the more dense clay particles do not tend to settle to the bottom of the composition and/or the less dense silica gel particles do not tend to rise to the top of the composition. Thus, the clay particles, preferably, have an average

> size and shape sufficiently similar to the average size and shape of the silica gel particles to prevent separation of the clay particles and the silica gel particles. (Col. 3, lines 32-41)

Further, Raymond, et al. states at Col. 10, lines 54-58:

> As a result of the differences of density of silica gel and clay particles, mixtures could tend to separate into its separate components during preparation and handling, i.e., the clay particles could settle to the bottom and the silica gel particles could tend to rise to the top of the mixture.

Thus, according to the Raymond, et al. disclosure, the silica gel and the absorbent material (clay) are mixed but are not combined to form a composite agglomerated granule as recited in Applicant's claim 1. Instead, the mixture of Raymond, et al. includes at least two distinct and independent types of particles. Accordingly, the rejection in the Office Action of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) is overcome. Allowance of claim 1 is respectfully requested.

Claims 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10 depend from claim 1 and allowable for at least the reasons set forth above with regard to claim 1. Allowance of claims 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10 is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 2, 8, and 11-13 are rejected in the Office Action under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Raymond, et al. Claims 2, 8, and 11-13 depend from claim 1 and are allowable over Raymond, et al. at least for the reasons set forth above with regard to claim 1. Accordingly, allowance of claims 2, 8, and 11-13 is respectfully requested.

New Claims 14-20

By way of this amendment, Applicant has added new claims 14-20. Claim 14 is an independent claim from which claims 15-20 depend. Consideration and allowance of claims 14-20 is respectfully requested.

Claim 14 is similar to claim 1 with the exception that claim 14 recites "silica gel dust". The addition and entrapment of silica gel dust in a composite agglomerated particle was disclosed in United States Application Serial No. 09/878,725. The present application claims priority from U.S. Application Serial No. 09/878,725 filed on June 11, 2001, now U.S. Patent No. 6,659,042.

In the specification of U.S. Application Serial No. 09/878,725, page 11, lines 9-12, states as follows:

> Yet another additive contemplated is desiccant pellet dust to provide increased moisture absorbency to the composite. The addition of the desiccant is also intended to absorb ammonia from the cat urine thereby trapping/neutralizing odor. Known desiccants include activated alumina, calcium chloride, **silica gel**, or zinc chloride. (Emphasis added.)

Applicant submits that new claims 14-20 will not require any additional searching. Applicant further submits that claim 14 is allowable at least for the reasons set forth above with regard to claim 1. Specifically, the Raymond, et al. reference does not disclose a composite agglomerated particle wherein the silica gel dust is entrapped in the agglomerated granule. Accordingly, claim 14 is allowable, which is respectfully requested. Claims 15-20 depend from claim 14 and are allowable at least for the reasons set forth above with regard to claim 14.

Consideration and allowance of claims 14-20 is respectfully requested.

No additional fee is believed to be due. However, if any fee is made payable by the filing of this paper, please consider this our authorization to charge the Deposit Account of the undersigned, No. 06-0540.

Respectfully submitted,

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Scott R. Zingerman, Reg. No. 35,422
FELLERS, SNIDER, BLANKENSHIP,
BAILEY & TIPPENS, P.C.
321 South Boston, Suite 800
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74103-3318
(918) 599-0621